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The status of the species of *Amadina*

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Hall & Moreau, in their *Atlas* (1970), place *A. fasciata* (Gmelin), the so-called Cut-throat Finch, and *A. erythrocephala* (Linnaeus), the Red-headed Finch, in the same superspecies, and consider it unlikely that there is genuine overlap between the ranges of the two species. It is therefore of interest that while staying on the farm "Uitduiker", near Northam, in the Thabazimbi district, western Transvaal, at ca. 24°55'S, 27°15'E., in May and June, 1969, I encountered and collected several specimens of both species of *Amadina* at their nest sites on the same cattle ranching property. On "Uitduiker" *A. erythrocephala dissita* was found in pairs associated with solitary stick nests of Buffalo Weavers *Bubalornis albirostris niger* placed in high trees in the largely undisturbed bushveld savanna, and gonad examination of specimens taken at the time indicated that they were preparing to breed. In the case of *A. fasciata*, this species was likewise found nest-building, only ca. 1,000 yards away, again in the bulky stick nests of Buffalo Weavers in large and usually old trees, but this time only in those left standing in the farm compound. Five specimens of the Cut-throat Finch were obtained, four males and a single female, which have since become the paratypes of the recently described *A. f. contigua* (see Clancey 1970). As *A. erythrocephala* and *A. fasciata* are now known to breed alongside one another in the western Transvaal, they should be considered as forming a species group rather than allospecies of a superspecies.

It has been stated on several occasions that *A. fasciata* is a recent colonist of both Rhodesia and the Transvaal, though the determination of two races in the region concerned suggests that this view is incorrect, and that this finch was simply overlooked in earlier times before the opening up of the said territories. There does appear, however, to have been some marked range expansion on the part of both races involved (*A. f. meridionalis* Neunzig, 1910: Livingstone, Zambia, and *A. f. contigua* Clancey, 1970: Northam, western Transvaal) in recent times, this associated somehow with the opening up of virgin Africa and the introduction of European agricultural methods (see Clancey 1970). The indications are that the range expansion is continuing. *A. f. meridionalis* appears to be fundamentally a form of the north-east of the South West Arid District, whereas *contigua* is a mesic form of the moist south-eastern aspects of the plateau of southern Africa.

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